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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 3rd MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. ESPINOSA (Mexico)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to document A/C.3/51/1, containing a letter dated 20 September 1996 from the President of the General Assembly on the allocation of items to the Third Committee. The subsequent agreements reached by the Committee on its work programme at the meeting on 20 September were reflected in document A/C.3/51/L.1/Rev.1. The updated information on the status of preparation of documentation was contained in document A/C.3/51/L.1/Add.1/Rev.1.

2. Document A/C.3/51/5 contained a letter dated 26 September 1996 from the Chairman of the Fifth Committee submitting relevant programmes of the proposed medium-term plan to the Third Committee for review. In order to carry out the review, she had asked the Secretariat to schedule an additional meeting at 10 a.m. on 23 October. She took it that the members of the Committee agreed to hold that additional meeting.

3. It was so decided.

4. The CHAIRMAN said that, with regard to the programmes enumerated in the letter from the Chairman of the Fifth Committee, she had pointed out to him that programme 20 (Humanitarian assistance) and programme 22 (Palestinian refugees) were not within the purview of the Third Committee at the current session.

AGENDA ITEM 158: QUESTION OF THE ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AGAINST ORGANIZED TRANSNATIONAL CRIME (A/C.3/51/7)

5. Mr. WYZNER (Poland), introducing item 158, said that his country had proposed the elaboration of a convention against transnational organized crime, which was a worldwide phenomenon that corrupted States and brought tragedy and suffering to many innocent people. The world was witnessing the spread of international crime in its most dangerous manifestations: terrorist acts, illicit drug trafficking, money laundering, trafficking in persons, including women and children, and illicit trafficking in weapons. Owing to the rapid development of international trade and economic relations, freedom of movement and the flow of capital, there was an alarming growth in the number of criminals whose activities had a transboundary, and often global, character.

6. No State, not even the most powerful, could combat organized crime alone. Close international cooperation, particularly coordination among law-enforcement institutions and criminal-justice systems, was therefore urgently needed. Neither the measures taken to combat transnational organized crime nor existing international instruments dealing with specific aspects of organized-crime prevention were sufficient to come to grips with the problem. Accordingly, the international community should agree on a framework convention that would establish effective forms of cooperation among States in providing legal assistance and setting up reliable reporting and monitoring systems with a view to reducing and eradicating organized crime. In Poland's view, the proposed new framework convention should be based on existing international instruments

regulating illicit narcotic drug trafficking, trafficking in persons, the protection of nuclear material and the import and export of cultural property as well as bilateral and regional agreements on crime prevention.

7. His delegation had noted with great interest the proposals recently made in the Sixth Committee by the United States of America and the Russian Federation aimed at combating and eliminating international terrorism, including terrorist bombings and acts of nuclear terrorism. Those proposals and the Polish proposal under consideration would complement each other. His country sought to promote greater awareness of organized crime in order to encourage Governments and the international community to provide the necessary means to combat that phenomenon. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice should be requested to elaborate, on a priority basis, a convention against transnational organized crime, taking into account the views of Member States as well as the draft text submitted by Poland in document A/C.3/51/7. Lastly, his delegation hoped that a draft resolution on that agenda item could be adopted by consensus.

STATEMENT BY THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR POLICY COORDINATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

8. Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said that a great deal had been achieved in terms of policy development over the past five or six years. The rethinking of development involved integrating economic, social and environmental concerns, which were very much the responsibility of the Third Committee. It was important to go beyond North-South rhetoric, and to identify a basis for work on development cooperation within the United Nations system based on shared objectives, values and interests. The Committee's work on social development, the advancement of women and human rights clearly involved efforts to identify such shared values and objectives.

9. Another element in the rethinking of development was the need to identify a role for public policy in an environment where Governments were moving more and more towards a belief in market-based development. That had been among the major objectives of recent global conferences such as the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women. Such issues as the condition of the world's women and children, the eradication of poverty, and human rights could not be left to market forces, and the Committee had played an important part in ensuring that such issues were on the agenda at those conferences.

10. Although much work remained to be done in the area of policy development, the key issue was currently the need to put greater emphasis on implementation. In recent years there had been a type of policy development which had been credible in the eyes not only of those involved in negotiations but also of those responsible for implementation at the national level, including non-government actors, such as businesses, trade unions, cooperatives, and above all non-governmental organizations. It was important to retain that credibility by showing that policy development was capable of placing appropriate emphasis on implementation. It required an integrated approach to monitoring and review at the national, regional and global levels, as well as an improved architecture in the functioning of the intergovernmental process within the United Nations,

so that the different elements of the monitoring and review process could reinforce one another. It also required that the analytical, normative and operational work of the United Nations system should be increasingly guided by the outcome of the major policy-development processes and by the underlying objectives of integration and mainstreaming.

11. One of the key objectives of that exercise was to create links between the normative and operational aspects. A number of task forces had been set up, the objective of which was to move from policy towards the creation of operational guidelines for implementation at the country level. It was also necessary to see how the intergovernmental process could contribute to ensuring improved links between policy development and implementation. A good example of that was the programme on disability, which sought to combine the analytical, normative and operational sides. Rather than stopping at the policy stage and declaring that implementation was someone else's responsibility, a system had been set up whereby a Special Rapporteur would report back to the Commission for Social Development, and through that to the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

12. The credibility of the policy-development processes would be eroded if it could not be shown that effective implementation could be ensured. The two major themes of interest to the Committee in that context were integration and mainstreaming. Integration was a key issue in the area of social development; social progress must be treated, not as a secondary issue, but as something to be written into development policy from the start. Mainstreaming was of greater importance in the case of gender equality. The issue of the advancement of women must be looked at not simply in terms of specific actions relating only to women, but with a view to ensuring gender sensitivity in the very formulation of development policy.

13. The role of the Third Committee in such areas was vital, and he looked forward to working with, and receiving guidance from, the Committee as part of the Secretariat's continuing efforts to move forward from the policy development phase to the implementation phase.

AGENDA ITEM 100: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (A/51/3 (Parts I and II), A/51/87, A/51/208-S/1996/543, A/51/210, A/51/267; A/C.3/51/4)

14. Mr. KRASSOWSKI (Division for Social Policy and Development, Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development), introducing the report on the status and role of cooperatives in the light of new economic and social trends (A/51/267), said that the report summarized information on how people's needs for basic social services were being met through a variety of cooperative arrangements. The report reviewed national experience in promoting the contribution of cooperatives to social development in forms compatible with the principles and objectives of the major international conferences held since 1990, and focused on the need for Governments to keep under review the legislative and administrative framework governing the functioning of cooperative-type arrangements in various sectors. Attention was also gi to ways of encouraging cooperative-to-cooperative assistance.

15. Mrs. de BARISH (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the developing countries, which had young populations, were concerned with the question of ageing because the world was in the midst of a major demographic revolution: the ageing of its population. At present, more than half of the elderly in the world lived in developing countries and by 2025 nearly three quarters of them would be in those countries. Unlike the developed countries, the developing countries had neither the infrastructure to deal with ageing nor the resources to create one.

16. The infrastructure for ageing in developed countries was too expensive to be duplicated in most developing nations. Accordingly, there was a need to generate and encourage responses to ageing that could be synchronized with the development policies and strategies of developing countries. Ageing and development were complementary, not contradictory, since the elderly could participate in and contribute to the development process. The Group of 77 and China were looking forward to participating in the Committee's work on that question and hoped to make progress in the preparations for the 1999 International Year of Older Persons.

17. Mr. OTUYELU (Nigeria) stressed the need for future-oriented social development to meet the challenge posed by population growth and diminishing resources. Privatization in many countries was putting health care beyond the reach of poor people. Owing to indebtedness and poor terms of trade, many developing countries were not able to allocate resources to social development. Greater international cooperation was necessary in order to make resources available to improve social development and invest in infrastructures. It was necessary to strike a balance between privatization and public responsibility for social development. Accordingly, his delegation appealed for more international cooperation among United Nations organizations in the field of social development in order to carry out the commitments undertaken at the World Summit for Social Development.

18. Mr. HADJIYSKY (Bulgaria) welcomed the selection of the Commission for Social Development as the principal body for coordinating and monitoring the follow-up to the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. A comprehensive analysis of ways to rationalize the Commission's work should be carried out.

19. In May 1996 the Bulgarian Government had adopted a national programme for social development as a follow-up to the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. The national programme set forth strategies aimed at promoting sustainable development, social peace and the gradual eradication of poverty. It sought to establish a socio-economic environment conducive to raising living standards; to reduce poverty, create jobs and curb unemployment; to promote social integration by meeting the needs of vulnerable groups; and to participate in international cooperation in social development. Bulgaria cooperated actively with UNDP in the social field and intended to launch in the near future a second joint project aimed at eliminating poverty and social marginalization.

20. Mr. KALLEHAUGE ((Denmark) said that he wished to highlight the question of disabled persons. The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held in Istanbul in June 1996, had been an important step for disabled persons in their ongoing struggle to achieve equal

opportunities. In the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements, it was clearly stated that the disabled persons had a right to shelter which was physically accessible. The Danish Government had already set up committees to formulate a national accessibility policy. Much, however, remained to be done. The implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and of the Long-term Strategy to Implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons to the Year 2000 and Beyond remained the main objective. The current focus - as recommended by the Special Rapporteur on the implementation of the Standard Rules - should be on legislation, coordination of work, organizations of persons with disabilities, accessibility, education and employment.

21. Legislation, in particular, should be given high priority, at both the national and international levels. When the rights of disabled persons were no longer recommendations but statutory instruments, the equalization of opportunities would gain much more momentum. The international community had an important role to play in that regard by recognizing some of the rights enumerated in the Standard Rules as fundamental human rights. Recognition of those rights would be enhanced by their inclusion in the agenda of the Commission on Human Rights.

22. In resolution 50/144, the General Assembly had noted the initiative taken by non-governmental organizations to develop a disability index based on the Standard Rules. Further to that initiative, questionnaires had been distributed to 650 organizations of disabled persons and replies had been received from more than 80 countries.

23. Fifteen years earlier, the World Health Organization (WHO) had introduced a new community-based rehabilitation strategy. He believed it would be opportune to carry out an international evaluation of the experience gained in implementing it. The evaluation would best be conducted by the World Bank, in cooperation with other relevant specialized agencies and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as well as representatives from organizations of disabled persons. He urged the Committee to lend its support to that proposal.

24. Mr. POULSEN (Denmark) said that he would focus on the question of youth participation in decision-making. Young people were less burdened than their elders by history and tradition and as such were able to contribute valuable new ideas. They were therefore key agents in social development and change and must be seen as natural and equal partners in society.

25. With the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the United Nations had taken an important step. The United Nations system must now move towards realizing the goals of the Programme. Projects drawing upon the special expertise of youth organizations should be developed. Peer learning, where young people educated one another, was one method of enabling young people to improve their own situation. Often, young people were best placed to address their peers and establish relationships based on trust. His delegation was particularly concerned that young women and girls, sometimes as young as 13, were having children, many before they were ready to cope with that responsibility, and often as a result of inadequate sex

education. The key to overcoming that problem was to provide them with unprejudiced information.

26. The World Youth Forum provided an important opportunity for non-governmental youth organizations to meet with representatives of intergovernmental organizations. Funds must be made available to ensure youth participation from the world's least developed countries. He was pleased to announce, in that connection, that the Danish Government was to provide a grant to enable 10 youth delegates from the least developed countries to participate in the forthcoming session of the World Youth Forum to be held in Vienna in November 1996. It was in the interest of the international community to give young people the possibility of participating in society and making decisions so that they could develop the skills they would require to lead the world into the future.

27. Mr. EDWARDS (Marshall Islands) recalled that the Republic of the Marshall Islands was currently the Chair of the South Pacific Forum. The delegations of the Forum had been actively involved in the recent World Summit for Social Development, and had reaffirmed their willingness to work towards an improved international structure for the betterment of their peoples. They had placed on record their commitment to human rights and to the fundamental premise that all their development efforts would be centred upon the Pacific Islands peoples.

28. The Governments of the region had closely examined the Programme of Action of the World Summit, and had attempted to distil out a priority agenda for national implementation. At recent meetings of the Forum, the whole gamut of issues including economic and environmental aspects of development had been addressed with a clear understanding of their social dimensions.

29. In the Marshall Islands, the public sector was being asked to do more with less, and was currently undergoing a far-reaching structural adjustment, which had led to increased unemployment. His Government had therefore sought loans for a transition programme involving retraining and private-sector incentive schemes. Fortunately the economy of the Marshall Islands was not one of those being drained by such wasteful expenditure as military budgets; the country had spent the greatest part of its resources on the social well-being of its people.

30. A number of community-based organizations were working hard to provide assistance to the less privileged. They were, however, badly under-funded. International support was sorely needed, but very little had so far been forthcoming. Governments and community-based organizations in the countries of the South Pacific Forum had made commendable progress in social development, and deserved support. He called upon those who pledged support for people-centred human and social development to look favourably on the countries of the region.

31. Mr. HUSSAIN (Sudan) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Social development was a matter given top priority by his Government. The family was particularly important, since society as a whole was a reflection of the family, and if the family was strong, so was society. However, it was clear that social development was only possible given continuing economic development, which in turn was only possible under peaceful circumstances. The international

community's concern with social development had been demonstrated by the six international conferences held in the past decade, and its wish to relieve poverty in developing countries had been stated in the 20/20 initiative, as described in the Programme of Action of the World Summit. However, that wish required political will and practical input. Neutrality and transparency were also important factors in implementation.

32. Technological and other developments had made the world a small village, and limited each State's freedom to decide its own economic and social policies. States should therefore cooperate to produce appropriate social and economic development programmes, guarantee political stability and security and avoid conflict. Strengthening local organizations would help to keep the problems of intolerance under control and assist in social development.

33. Since the end of the cold war, armed conflicts had become regional and inter-communal rather than global, and savings in military expenditure had not been as great as had been hoped. Complete and universal disarmament would be a prime factor in creating the right atmosphere for social development.

34. Concern for all sectors of society was a first step towards building a healthy society. The Sudan paid particular attention to young people, as the foundation stone of development. In the past three years, the number of institutions of further education had been greatly increased, as had the number of technical and vocational training institutes. The Government had also increased employment opportunities for young people, and was working to attract investment to provide the necessary resources. Because of the importance of education to social development, the Government was making every effort to eradicate illiteracy throughout the country.

35. The nature of the family in modern society was undergoing great change. Some societies saw the individual as having the primary role in society, thereby diminishing the role of the family as the primary unit. The individual had become divorced from his family, and that had engendered many current social ills. The Sudan considered that the individual must be set firmly against his natural background of the family. The family, as a child's first teacher, represented the most secure foundation for the future of every society. It had an important role to play in producing a sound and healthy person and in beginning to instil the principles and practice of human rights. Because of its belief in the importance of the family, the Government had made arrangements to facilitate marriage.

36. Social development could only be achieved through the eradication of poverty, the realization of peace and security, the cultivation by societies of decent moral values and the elimination of social injustice and discrimination on the grounds of religion, race or culture.

37. Ms. SKEI GRANDE (Norway), speaking as a youth representative, said that the planet which her generation would inherit was facing enormous global challenges, such as the global warming, which would have major environmental consequences. The sharing of the world's resources, including water and food, was also a major problem. Young people worldwide faced the same challenges and should be granted increased access to decision-making. Their participation was both desirable and

necessary; their visions, solidarity and strong motivation were badly needed. Young people, through their own organizations, should be allowed to shape their future at all levels. The most important mass movements for peace, human rights, the environment and democracy had all been strongly supported by young people. Student movements had brought about significant democratic changes in several countries.

38. The United Nations should be in the front line in that respect. The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (General Assembly resolution 50/81, annex) was a step in the right direction, but must be followed up. The young must be given increased influence at the United Nations, and recommendations made by youth organizations such as the Youth Forum of the United Nations System should receive more attention.

39. In the collective effort to counter the serious threats to the existence of the human race, every little step would count. She appealed to all countries to give young people more access to decision-making, both regionally and nationally, and to let them participate in shaping their own future. The States Members of the United Nations should work towards increased numbers of youth representatives at their meetings, and enable the Youth Forum to become a regular event with secure financing.

40. Ms. MESDOUA (Algeria) said that changes in the world economy and increasing modernization and globalization had side effects which led to economic disparities and potential threats to international peace and security. The worsening poverty, unemployment and social disintegration, particularly in the countries of the southern hemisphere, called for sustained efforts by the international community to promote a new concept of international development cooperation. The World Summit for Social Development provided a useful frame of reference for the policies of individual Governments. The objectives agreed at the Summit showed that the international community was determined to intensify its struggle against poverty, exclusion and social disintegration, to create productive employment and to increase international solidarity. Such solidarity was essential if the widening gap between developed and developing countries was to be narrowed. A concerted approach was required.

41. Algeria had succeeded, in a few decades, in providing employment, free health care and education, and a broad social-welfare system for its population. Despite considerable economic difficulties, her Government was determined to preserve those achievements and to bring about economic, social and political renewal based on a market economy, social justice, the rejection of any form of marginalization or exclusion, and the establishment of a durable democratic system. The support of the international community was required to that end. Her Government hoped that national efforts to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of individuals and peoples would be strengthened by effective international action. International financial institutions must adapt their strategies and review their programmes in the interest of secure global development; otherwise, individual country's efforts to strengthen democracy might not succeed.

42. The time had come for the United Nations to give concrete expression to its original mandate in the economic and social fields. The Organization could be a real force for peace only if it were also a force for development. Only if

intergovernmental agencies were strengthened and their work harmonized could the United Nations system make a significant contribution to development. The Commission for Social Development had a vital role to play in the system-wide coordination of activities in the social field. Her delegation welcomed the strengthening of the Commission's mandate and the increase in its membership. Those measures should be accompanied by increased resources to enable it to accomplish its tasks.

43. The follow-up to the Summit required real cooperation and partnership between States, the United Nations system, international financial and monetary institutions, and non-governmental organizations. They must all work together to provide the means required for such a great undertaking. As long as there was poverty, no country could be said to have achieved true development.

44. Mr. WISSA (Egypt) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the Group of 77 and China. There was a pressing need to increase efforts in favour of social development, and to examine the reasons for the lack of equitable development throughout the world. The State had a pivotal role to play in development, but its efforts could only be successful in a favourable international environment created by such factors as trade, investment, bilateral resources and the transfer of technology.

45. The family and youth, ageing and the disabled were all interrelated issues, of direct relevance to comprehensive development in any society. The family was the basis of society, and his Government therefore continued to work to raise awareness of social and development role of the family, and the part it had to play in the implementation of programmes affecting the family, particularly in the areas of health, education and the environment.

46. Education was not merely desirable in itself, but one of the principal means of achieving development. His country's education policy was therefore built on an understanding of the need for cooperation between the local authorities and non-governmental organizations in confronting such problems as illiteracy and the provision of proper education for girls and young women.

47. Egypt welcomed the conceptual framework of a programme for the International Year of Older Persons in 1999, since that would help to highlight the difficulties experienced by older persons, and ways to alleviate them. Older persons represented an important resource upon which Governments could call if appropriate channels were found.

48. His country considered it very important to educate and integrate disabled persons into society, since their marginalization was a violation of basic human rights and of religious and humanitarian values.

49. The Egyptian Government had begun to elaborate a set of policies and programmes to implement the recommendations of the World Summit for Social Development. A broad national programme to eliminate poverty was being carried out.

50. With reference to the 20/20 initiative embodied in the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, it had been agreed that the initial

target was 0.7 per cent of gross national product, and that the ability of the Government of a developing country to devote 20 per cent of its expenditure to basic social services would depend on the level of economic development, its debt burden and other financial commitments. The 20/20 initiative should therefore include agreement on the concept of social programmes, donor assistance based on financial accounts prepared by recipient countries, and the preparation of national budgets involving specific allocation and follow-up.

51. Mr. GUBAREVICH (Belarus) said that the scale and variety of the social problems facing the world today threatened the very foundations of the normal development of human civilization. It was therefore vital to ensure that Governments and the United Nations worked together to translate the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action into reality. The recent special session of the Commission for Social Development devoted to the urgent goal of eradicating poverty had made an important contribution to that end. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General on the status and role of cooperatives in the light of new economic and social trends (A/51/267), his delegation recognized the part which the cooperative movement had to play in implementing the commitments made at Copenhagen, particularly in the areas of employment, social integration and poverty eradication.

52. Conscious of the inseparable link between economic growth and social development, his Government had striven to avoid a sharp drop in the living standards of the population in the current period of transition and, accordingly, it had taken measures to stabilize the economy and counter inflation. Nevertheless, the economic reforms had been accompanied by a dramatic fall in output, rising prices, the reduction of real income and a decrease in the funds available to the State to deal with those problems. In addition, spending necessitated by the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster still accounted for one fifth of the country's annual budget.

53. The increase in the proportion of older persons in the population of Belarus was placing a mounting burden on those of working age, while expenditure on pensions, medical care and social assistance for the elderly had grown markedly. Taking as its reference the International Plan of Action on Ageing, Belarus had drawn up its own programme of measures to assist older persons. Central aims were the transformation of services for the elderly, the safeguarding of their rights in law and the construction of special institutions to provide health care and social services for pensioners.

54. The situation of families during the current period of economic transition was of great concern to his Government. Families with low incomes - for the most part large and single-parent families - were facing extreme hardship. In addition, there was now a need to address the problems of families that had become refugees or were affected by unemployment. His Government had set up a system of allowances for families with children. The incomes of the population were currently being indexed to inflation, and a rent-subsidy scheme had been worked out.

55. His delegation believed that it was essential to strengthen the Commission for Social Development, which played a key role in formulating and coordinating policy on social questions. That aim would best be achieved, in his view,

through intensive, rather than extensive measures. Specifically, the Commission should seek more efficient methods of organizing its work, both during and between sessions, and the resources already at its disposal should be used more effectively. He welcomed the proposals that the members of the Commission should hold informal, open consultations and that there should be regular meetings of the Bureau. He supported the widening of the Bureau's powers in the belief that such a step would enable consensus to be reached more quickly on the Commission's heavy programme of work.

56. The concept of dialogues with groups of experts, for the most part representatives of the relevant bodies of the United Nations system and of the Governments of Member States, was of great interest. His delegation urged that due regard should be given to the principle of equitable geographical distribution when the applications of such experts were considered. He supported the view that non-governmental organizations should play a greater part in the Commission's work. Finally, while his delegation welcomed the overwhelming majority of the measures proposed in order to strengthen the role of the Commission, that goal must be achieved within existing resources; he could not, therefore, support the proposals to widen the Commission's membership and hold annual sessions.

57. Among the most welcome results of the recent sessions of the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women was the recognition in their resolutions that the international community must accord special assistance to countries with economies in transition, particularly in the social sphere and in the struggle with poverty. It was regrettable, however, that that recognition had not found reflection in the relevant United Nations programmes. He urged delegations to consider the proposal by Belarus concerning the adoption of a global programme of assistance to countries with economies in transition. The efforts of Governments to realize the commitments made in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action must, in his view, be supported by the international community.

58. Mr. REYES RODRÍGUEZ (Cuba) expressed his delegation's support for the remarks made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Any social development programme must comprise policies for action in favour of young people, the elderly and persons with disabilities, all of which were groups to which his Government gave particular priority. Equity and equality of opportunities for all had been fundamental to the progress made in Cuba over the past 30 years.

59. There was no sector of economic, political and social life in Cuba in which young people did not play an essential role. Unceasing improvement in the opportunities available for young people to participate fully, in social life were the result of the policy ensured by the presence of considerable numbers of young people in Parliament and the executive branch. Cuba welcomed the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, and would support the efforts of the Commission for Social Development to evaluate its implementation.

60. Cuba would also participate to the best of its ability in the preparations for the International Year of Older Persons in 1999. The elderly in Cuba

benefited from a scheme of universal medical and hospital care, as well as social security. A major initiative was the setting up of 'grandparents' circles', which were volunteer organizations with a total of more than 150,000 members designed to involve older persons in the community through social activities. They also increased older people's awareness of their own social youthfulness by giving them a role in the education of young people and in other community activities.

61. Support for persons with disabilities included both assistance to their organizations and actions in the areas of health, education, employment, cultural activities and sport. Cuba had nearly 500 centres of special education for persons with disabilities.

62. Despite Cuba's difficult economic situation, which had worsened as a result of the tightening of the economic blockage imposed unilaterally by the United States, his Government would never abandon the humanist approach that had governed its social policy over the past three decades. Cuba would continue to be a society for all.

63. Mr. PACE (Malta) said that the role of government was fundamental to social and development issues. Many societies were experiencing major change, sometimes as a result of political measures, and such changes formed part of an international evolution. Governments should implement policies which guaranteed freedom to the citizen as a member of the community. Political initiatives could enable citizens to seek a better future for themselves and their families, and to realize their potential. Proper measures would ensure the generation of wealth, its equitable distribution and more freedom in all spheres. Social cohesion was only possible if social and cultural diversity was preserved and encouraged. The nature of social policy had changed fundamentally. His own Government had adopted the notion of a welfare society, a concept superseding the welfare State. The role of government was to integrate social services by prioritizing the needs of individuals. Governments had to work closely with voluntary organizations to enhance the participation of all those involved. Perhaps the most important accomplishment of the World Summit for Social Development had been the commitment to the goal of eradicating poverty.

64. The family was a central element of his Government's social policy, as representing the basic unit of society and the natural environment for the healthy development and functioning of the individual and therefore society. Recent legislation had given legal recognition to the pivotal role played by women in society and particularly in the family. The Family Law provided that husband and wife were equal partners with equal rights in decisions in all matters affecting their family, particularly the care of their offspring. Furthermore, in line with its belief in equal opportunities for all, the Government of Malta had taken measures to ensure disabled persons could realize their potential.

65. Older people had a right to a dignified life, and to recognition for their past contribution to society. They were entitled to all the help they needed to overcome handicaps due to age, limitations or disease. While the State could provide the elderly with financial benefits, it was the family that should provide intangible benefits like love and companionship. Old age was not a

disease but a phase of life that required a lot of care, respect and love. In that respect, useful work was being done by the International Institute on Ageing (INIA) in Malta. The INIA served as a bridge between countries for the collection, exchange and dissemination of data, information and skills that concerned all aspects of ageing. It promoted technical cooperation in network-building and the establishment of focal points for training needs and training-related activities at the national level.

66. Government policy with regard to young people was to provide them with equal opportunities for education at all levels and to integrate them as a positive force for change and renewal into the mainstream of the political, social and economic life of the country, recognizing them as a vital element of the future of the nation.

67. Malta had chosen to achieve social justice amongst its people, particularly those in need. The Government had created an environment which encouraged voluntary and private initiative as important partners in the social field. Society had to ensure that, apart from providing personalized services to persons most in need, their potential opportunities and financial position were also improved.

68. Mr. CHANG SEE TEN (Malaysia) said that young people were both a major and potential human resource and were key agents for future social development. Their imagination, ideals, energies and vision were essential for the continuing development of their society. Without proper guidance they could easily fall prey to various social ills which would be costly to redress. Over 60 per cent of the young people in the world lived in Asia, and by the year 2025, that percentage was expected to reach 89 per cent. The socio-economic implications of that demographic change could not be lightly dismissed, since it could easily translate into diminished employment opportunities, lack of resources for social services and reduced education opportunities, all of which could lead to delinquency, crime and drug abuse. Youth in developing countries needed access to better education, training, technical assistance, technology, health and credit facilities. Addressing the needs of young people would ensure economic and social stability. Under the sixth Malaysian plan (1990-1995), various youth-development programmes had been implemented.

69. The designation of 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons was timely and appropriate, since all countries were experiencing an increase in the absolute and relative size of their ageing population. By 2030, more than 1.4 billion people would be 60 years old or over, and most of those would live in Asia and the Pacific region. Given greater life expectancy and the breakdown of the extended family, steps should be taken to ensure that family ties were maintained and that caring for the elderly continued to be the responsibility of the family. In order to encourage children to take care of older persons, Malaysia had, since 1992, provided tax relief to children for the medical expenses of their elderly parents. Medical benefits for public-sector employees were extended to include their parents. Malaysia had formulated a National Policy for the Elderly in order to ensure that older persons were able to enjoy independence and quality of life. Planning for older persons in Malaysia would continue to take their needs into account.

70. More than 500 million people throughout the world had some type of physical, mental or sensory impairment, and about 80 per cent of those lived in the developing world. The International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981 had helped to publicize the needs of that population and the need for policies aimed at integrating disabled persons into economic, political and social life. Malaysia was fully engaged at national and international levels in promoting the full participation and equality of people with disabilities in society. The Government would continue to care for them through the provision of education, training and rehabilitation programmes.

71. Malaysia recognized the family as the basic unit of society and the primary source of caring. It was time to go back to the basics of family life and values, and it was important to empower the family to face the challenges of the coming century. The concept of the traditional family must not be lost in rapid global changes. Malaysia therefore supported the improvement of economic and social conditions to enable family members to cope with change. It was important to promote healthy families, family planning, nutrition, child-development programmes, parenting skills and interaction between parents and children.

72. People were the core and the key to development. Investing in the well-being of people meant investing in the future well-being of all societies. It was time to empower the family, youth, the elderly and the disabled to face future challenges.

73. Archbishop MARTINO (Observer for the Holy See) said that the common theme of the recent major United Nations conferences on social questions had been the search for a new concept of human-centred development. The human person should be the focus of all social, political and economic activity. The existing models of development had proved inadequate in that they had failed to overcome the problems of inequality and social exclusion. Poverty was a prime cause of social exclusion and had been a focus of attention at the World Summit for Social Development. States had committed themselves to establishing, by the end of 1996, national strategies for the eradication of extreme poverty and his delegation hoped that it would be possible to review the progress made thus far.

74. One of the first obligations of any nation must be to invest in its youth. Young people must be enabled to channel their idealism into the creation of a world where fundamental values were respected and human rights protected and where an atmosphere of solidarity prevailed. For many young people, however, the future held little promise. Some, especially girls, lacked educational opportunities. Others faced unemployment, even long-term unemployment. Drugs and crime daily destroyed the lives of thousands of young people, while the current climate of sexual permissiveness made it difficult to inculcate in the young a proper sense of responsibility with regard to their sexual behaviour. In such a context, there was a clear need, and indeed a desire on the part of many young people, to find a new moral vision.

75. Medical advances, particularly the eradication of many diseases, had led to a dramatic decline in mortality. As longevity had increased, however, respect and reverence for human life had diminished. It was difficult to believe that euthanasia was now perceived by some as an acceptable alternative to caring for

the sick and elderly and disabled persons. The Catholic Church called upon the international community to renew its recognition of the sacred dignity of all human life and to work to develop a new understanding of the contribution which the elderly could bring to society.

76. The family was the basic unit of society and played a crucial role in the world today. He urged all Governments and societies to recognize the special place of the family. The Catholic Church, for its part, would continue its efforts to strengthen and safeguard the sacredness of marriage and to promote the role of parents as the first educators of their children. The family of nations must recognize that the history of mankind, the history of salvation passed by way of the family and that the family stood at the centre of the struggle between good and evil, life and death and all that was opposed to love.

77. Mrs. BARGHOUTI (Observer for Palestine) said that the development of any society depended on the advancement of its young people, particularly in the fields of education, health and employment. The protection of the rights of young people should therefore be among the priorities of States and of the international community. The integration of girls and young women in national development policies was of special importance. Obstacles to gender equality must be removed in order to empower them to participate on an equal footing with their male counterparts in social, cultural, economic and political life. She welcomed the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and hoped that a concerted effort would be made, and the necessary resources provided, to enable the goals of that Programme to be achieved.

78. The young people of Palestine comprised over 70 per cent of its population. Most had known life only under Israeli occupation or in refugee camps. Nevertheless, they had played a major part in the struggle for Palestinian independence. Many had suffered physical and psychological trauma as a result, and all had paid a high price in terms of lost opportunities. Today, they continued to face harsh economic conditions, high unemployment and recurrent violence. Young Palestinians were still being detained in Israeli prisons.

79. Against that background, the Palestinian Authority was aware of its responsibility to strive, with the help of the international community, to create a better society in which young Palestinians could enjoy the fruits of freedom and prosperity. The establishment of a Ministry of Youth and Sport testified to its commitment to the advancement of Palestinian youth. Sadly, however, with the breakdown of the peace process, the optimism felt by so many had given way to despair. It was her hope that the peace process would be salvaged and put back on track for the benefit not only of Palestinian youth but of all the youth of the region.

80. Mr. FREEDMANN (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the social situation today was characterized by unacceptably high levels of unemployment and underemployment. There had been a parallel rise in poverty and social exclusion, in particular in the developing world. Nevertheless, ILO remained committed to pursuing the goals which had emerged from the Copenhagen Summit and to promoting the integration of the world's youth, elderly and disabled persons into productive employment. ILO had recently developed an international information base and network, using the Internet, to enable

organizations engaged in research on the training and employment of persons with disabilities to share information. ILO was also cooperating with the Special Rapporteur on Disability to monitor implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

81. As world leaders searched for new and enhanced means to address the profound social problems facing the international community, the role of cooperatives, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report (A/51/267), was receiving renewed attention. While the global economy offered tremendous potential rewards, many were still left on the margins. Cooperatives were an effective means of integrating disadvantaged or socially excluded people in economic activity and society as a whole. Cooperatives also made a vital contribution to job creation and the promotion of sustainable growth. ILO had long been committed to supporting cooperatives. In particular, it valued their dynamic grass-roots role. By requiring that members committed their own resources as a share of enterprise capital, cooperatives ensured that local capital, often underused, was mobilized to support entrepreneurial development.

82. Like most institutions in society, cooperatives had not remained immune from change. Over the past decade, the liberalization of the economies of many developing countries had put an end to the special support and treatment which cooperatives had enjoyed, forcing them to compete on the open market with private enterprises. But, at the same time, democratization had lightened the political burden on cooperatives by allowing them to function as truly democratic organizations in the interests of their members, rather than as extended instruments of the State.

83. ILO was involved in several interregional programmes aimed at promoting the development of democratic and viable cooperatives in developing countries. COOPNET aimed to strengthen the managerial capacity of cooperatives by addressing their human resource development needs. A second, complementary programme, COOPREFORM was intended to encourage the development of cooperatives through legislative policy reforms. Finally, INDISCO worked with indigenous and tribal communities to help them become self-reliant, while respecting their traditional values, practices and culture. The programmes were already operational in a large number of countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa. ILO had a long history of identifying and implementing coherent, holistic approaches to promoting productive employment and social integration. Cooperatives remained a core element of that mandate.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
4th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 15 October 1996
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. ESPINOSA (Mexico)

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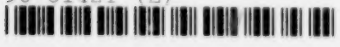

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 100: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued) (A/51/3 (Parts I and II), A/51/87, A/51/208-S/1996/543, A/51/210, A/51/267; A/C.3/51/4)

1. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said that social disintegration, poverty, hunger, unemployment, crime and the unfavourable international economic environment continued to retard social development. There was need for a renewed commitment at both the national and international levels to tackle social problems. His country sought to promote social development through poverty eradication, job creation and human resources development. Its development programmes were designed to meet the basic needs of the population and promote self-reliance. A major share of Bangladesh's development budget was allocated to the social sector, with the highest priority given to education, health and population control.

2. His country's social development strategies included special programmes for enhancing the status of women, children, youth, the disabled, the elderly and minorities. Full participation by minorities and other marginalized groups remained a priority. In that regard, mention should be made of the active involvement of the civil society and non-governmental organizations. Bangladesh supported the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, which would require a firm commitment by Governments and the international community at the national, regional and international levels. His delegation would appreciate information on programmes being undertaken by United Nations agencies to support the efforts of Governments to implement the World Programme.

3. His country's national youth policy set forth programmes to promote the participation of youth in education, skills development, employment and community-development activities. Special emphasis had been placed on ensuring the active participation of girls and young women. The equalization of opportunities for disabled persons was essential. In spite of its lack of resources, Bangladesh had special assistance programmes for people with disabilities. His Government fully supported the statement made by Costa Rica at the previous meeting on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the question of ageing, and remained committed to the International Plan of Action on Ageing. It had adopted national plans to ensure observance of the rights of the elderly and welcomed the programme for observing the International Year of Older Persons in 1999.

4. Turning to the role of cooperatives, outlined in the Secretary-General's report (A/51/267), he said that Bangladesh had a well-developed cooperative movement in the spheres of rural development, poverty eradication, and empowerment of poor and disadvantaged women and persons without assets. The potential of cooperatives should be utilized in attaining social development goals and there should be increased participation at the regional and international levels. There was a need for greater coordination in the field of social development between the United Nations, its specialized agencies and the

international financial institutions. United Nations programmes should be strengthened in order to play a catalytic role in social development at the national level. The Economic and Social Council should play a more pro-active role in harnessing the resources available to the functional commissions. Lastly, the Commission for Social Development should be further strengthened to enable it to monitor the achievement of social development goals.

5. Mr. ADAWA (Kenya) said that his country attached great importance to eradicating poverty, expanding productive employment, and promoting social integration, the advancement of women and respect for human rights. National and international action should give priority to eliminating the obstacles to development, promoting employment and creating a favourable international economic and social environment. His Government's first priority was to maintain a stable macroeconomic framework, while continuing structural reforms to accelerate economic growth. Far-reaching adjustment policies had been put into place to support growth and integrate social sectors, benefiting the poor and other vulnerable groups, such as youth and women. Current programmes encompassed welfare and basic services, skills development, employment and job creation, rural development and environmental conservation.

6. Kenya's welfare and basic services programmes included immunization and the provision of essential drugs to health centres, and nutrition-support programmes for children under five years and for expectant and lactating mothers. His Government had launched national programmes to provide income support, promote self-employment and develop small enterprises through skills upgrading, access to electricity and water, and marketing. Kenya had given priority to education and health and actively pursued a population control policy.

7. The cooperative movement had played an important role in raising living standards. His Government had strengthened the capacity of cooperatives for setting up sustainable enterprises to create employment and generate income. Kenya supported the World Programme of Action for Youth and had set up programmes to implement the priorities identified in the Programme. The international donor community and non-governmental organizations should provide financial support for the Programme. Kenya had also taken measures for the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (General Assembly resolution 50/144, annex), and was grateful for the generous assistance provided for its vocational and rehabilitation programmes.

8. Mrs. MARTINEZ (Ecuador) said that her Government, in its efforts to promote social development, had signed important multilateral and bilateral agreements for exchanging information on problems relating to youth, older persons, the disabled and the family. The right to development, including social development, was a universal human right. Both developed and developing countries must assume the responsibility to foster social development. Her Government had established programmes to assist the most vulnerable sectors of society and had enacted legislation specifically designed to protect their rights.

9. Her country's plan of action on gerontology included guidelines from the International Plan of Action on Ageing and provided for the participation of

State, municipal and private bodies. With regard to disabled persons, the National Council for the Disabled sought to coordinate all efforts by public and private institutions to provide training and counselling. The National Bureau for Youth coordinated activities by private and public organizations relating to the problems encountered by young people. Lastly, she stressed that that important effort must be supported by the competent international agencies.

10. Mr. HUIJSMANS (Netherlands), speaking as his country's youth representative, said that the United Nations tended to portray young people in a one-sided manner as homemakers and builders of families. But young people were politically committed; they were capable of assuming responsibilities and shaping their own lives. With their energy and vision, they could make a long-term contribution to world peace. The United Nations should offer opportunities to the young and enable them to play a full role in the life of society. A charter on the rights of youth was necessary in order to give young people a voice and empower them through personal responsibility.

11. There were situations where the rights of young people were continuously violated. In many developing countries, particularly in Asia, those in authority placed greater emphasis on economic development than on the development of democracy. Over the years, young people and students had played a significant role in the pro-democracy movements in Thailand, South Korea, the Philippines, China, Myanmar and, most recently, Indonesia. In some of those countries, students had been prohibited from dealing with political or social questions. If they demonstrated in public, they ran the risk of arrest and interrogation with the use of intimidation and violence. Those were flagrant violations of the basic right of young people to concern themselves with important social issues, such as improving the situation of landless peasants and workers. The authorities concerned should enter into dialogue with the various groups in their societies, particularly students.

12. The conscription of children for armed conflicts was shocking. The United Nations should take immediate measures to ban the recruitment of children and to demobilize child soldiers, helping them to resume their education and lead normal lives. A working group was elaborating a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to raise the minimum age at which children might become involved in armed conflicts and for voluntary recruitment in the armed services. He hoped that the draft protocol would be adopted and implemented as speedily as possible and that stricter rules would prohibit the use of child soldiers.

13. The United Nations should view young people as active participants in solving problems, not just as victims. Member States could be instrumental in that regard by guaranteeing the rights of young people and providing them with greater opportunities. The Organization could increase the number of young trainees in United Nations agencies and could target development aid for projects run for and by young people.

14. Mrs. GITTENS-JOSEPH (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the 13 Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that were members of the United Nations, said that in spite of progress made in recent years, profound social problems continued to exist. That challenge must be met in a

comprehensive manner in order to mitigate the problems that threatened to disintegrate the social fabric. In the Caribbean region, much was being done to promote family life and support the family as the basic social unit. Preventive and remedial programmes had been introduced to meet the needs of the family, emphasizing the responsibilities of individual family members, the important role of parents, the need to balance work and family commitments, the protection and development of children, and counselling and support services. Family courts had become a reality in some countries and a family code for the region was expected to be finalized soon.

15. Since there were many female-headed families in the Caribbean region, the empowerment of women in the economic, social and political spheres was particularly important. Efforts were being made to lay down a regional policy on gender equality and social justice. Improving the economic position of women was especially important in that regard. The neglect and exploitation of children and the growing phenomenon of street children caused grave concern. Initiatives are under way to address the problem of street children by providing counselling and reuniting children with their families. The Caribbean Community had initiated a series of youth consultations, with the emphasis on participation by young people, in order to develop a regional youth policy and plan of action. The World Programme of Action for Youth would be useful for Caribbean countries as they tackled the problems affecting youth in the region. Measures were being taken to deal with anti-social behaviour by young people and reduce the high level of youth unemployment.

16. Many CARICOM member States intended to participate fully in the International Year of Older Persons by undertaking projects that would benefit the elderly. Many Caribbean countries were formulating national policies to involve senior citizens in national development and integrate them into society. There were various programmes throughout the region to expand opportunities for the elderly and improve their situation through social welfare and public health reforms. Governments and non-governmental organizations cooperated to provide social services, counselling, recreational activities and medical care. Family and community support was encouraged. The CARICOM member States were also taking steps to implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, in order to improve the situation of people with disabilities. Some countries had introduced financial assistance for the disabled, such as monthly disability assistance grants to needy persons unable to earn an adequate income.

17. The cooperative movement in the Caribbean region was a vibrant economic institution. Cooperatives served as a catalyst in addressing critical needs and had assisted in developing an entrepreneurial culture, especially among disadvantaged groups. Some countries were carrying out national policies for cooperatives to make the sector more sustainable and integrate it with other economic and social sectors. Initiatives were under way to amend legislation to promote cooperative programmes oriented towards job creation, productivity, foreign exchange earnings and savings, and education relating to cooperatives.

18. Mrs. BENNANI-AKHAMLICH (Morocco) noted that the series of world conferences organized by the United Nations in the 1990s had drawn attention to problems affecting children, women, the environment, population, employment, education, health, nutrition and habitat. The success of the programmes of action adopted

at those conferences rested on the political will of national leaders to fulfil their commitments to the developing countries. Improved utilization of development resources continued to be a key issue. Development goals must be fully implemented by Governments in collaboration with the United Nations system, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations and the international community. Development cooperation must be set up between developed and developing countries for those goals to be attained. International assistance was vital to support the efforts of the developing countries, particularly African and least developed countries. Assistance provided by developed countries would be beneficial to the donor countries themselves and would contribute to the socio-economic development of the entire world.

19. A country's ability to satisfy the needs of its population rested upon political stability, positive social indicators, economic competition and scientific and technological progress. Her delegation welcomed the recent adoption by the Economic and Social Council of a resolution increasing the membership of the Commission for Social Development and annualizing its sessions, and hoped that sufficient resources would be provided for the work of the Commission. Taking account of the major contribution made to social development by the cooperative movement, the United Nations should help cooperatives in developing countries by providing all-round assistance.

20. In 1992 the Moroccan people had voted to amend the Constitution, in order to give priority to the well-being of its citizens. An economic and social council had been created to implement the constitutional provision that all Moroccan citizens had the right to education and employment. Owing to economic difficulties, Morocco had been obliged to adopt a restructuring policy in 1983. Although economic growth over the past 10 years had produced positive effects, it had not benefited the whole population. The Government had therefore adopted a national social plan which would be especially beneficial to people in rural areas, and comprised measures for health care, education, electrification, drinking water, sanitation and housing. Particular emphasis was being placed on the protection of the family, which was the natural environment for the well-being of all members of society. Programmes had been created for the integration of women, the education of girl children, and the protection of young people, the elderly and persons with disabilities. Encouraging results had also been achieved in the area of family planning.

21. Her delegation hoped that the Secretary-General's special initiative for Africa would mobilize the entire international community to contribute as generously as possible to economic and social recovery in Africa.

22. Mr. DONOKUSUMO (Indonesia) said that the Secretary-General's report on cooperatives (A/51/267) underlined their importance in providing economic opportunities to the less advantaged and in alleviating poverty. However, more information concerning the impact on cooperatives of the overall world economic situation would have made the report more comprehensive.

23. Indonesia had long supported the use of cooperatives as a means of empowering the poor and providing them with a vehicle to contribute to national development as well as to enhance their individual situations. As part of the

follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995, due consideration should be given to supporting the role of cooperatives. Governments, international financial institutions and other international organizations should further promote policies enabling small enterprises, cooperatives and other forms of micro-enterprises to develop their capacities for income generation and employment creation.

24. Indonesia had made considerable efforts to improve the management of its cooperatives and to promote them as viable institutions. Education and training were being provided to their members in order to enhance their professionalism and give them the essential managerial and marketing skills. By 1994, there had been a total cooperative membership in Indonesia of nearly 25 million people. The Government would continue to extend the necessary support to cooperatives, which were considered to be a central mechanism for national development. The President of Indonesia had recently said that small businesses and cooperatives could participate in national development through strategic partnerships with large companies, and had called for better cooperation between farmers and private companies to develop industries that could add value to agricultural products. The objective was to improve the management of agro-industries, diversify food products and increase their competitiveness.

25. He reiterated his Government's support for the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action, and its determination to work at all levels towards its full implementation.

26. Mr. REZVANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, despite substantial global economic and social progress, much suffering still prevailed in different parts of the world. More than 1.3 billion people lived in poverty and unacceptable conditions. Although the gap between rich and poor countries persistently widened, they faced common problems such as high rates of unemployment and social disintegration. Compounding such problems were threats to global integration, peace and security, crime, violence, conflict and war. Much remained to be done to improve the quality of life for a large number of people in the world.

27. The past few years had seen international efforts to redefine social development concepts as well as social and economic strategies; at the World Summit for Social Development, issues such as poverty eradication, productive employment and social integration had been addressed, and participants had committed themselves to accord the highest priority to the promotion of social progress worldwide. That entailed achieving justice and betterment of the human condition in an environment conducive to participation by all. The World Summit had explored innovative sources of financing, but there had been no concrete action so far. The fulfilment of that task and of the other Summit goals required political will, a favourable international atmosphere and access to adequate resources and opportunities, particularly at the international level.

28. National efforts and resources alone would not suffice. Such challenges called for an enabling international environment and financial support. Prescriptions for national social integration should be equally applied at the international level. Each State should have an equitable share in shaping the international economic, social and political order. There was a need to forge

international relations in which might and wealth did not generate rights and in which international law was fully observed. The coercive economic measures adopted by certain States against developing countries were inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations and the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development. Such measures impeded social development in developing countries. Promotion of respect for the rule of law by all States, big and small, would serve the interest of the international community as a whole.

29. His Government's national development strategies and programmes were being given a people-centred approach. Quality of life was a new focus of concern, and a large portion of total public expenditure had been allocated to social development and poverty alleviation, producing beneficial effects on social indicators.

30. Empowering the young with knowledge and resources, as well as meeting their basic human needs, should be primary goals of national development. As their individual development and social contribution would shape the future of the world, investment in youth-related issues was the foundation for national development. The Islamic Republic of Iran was embarking upon a wide range of initiatives, such as the establishment of local youth commissions and the allocation of appropriate funds.

31. Disabled persons had the inherent right to respect for their human dignity. They should receive the support they needed within the ordinary structures of education, health, employment, vocational training, and rehabilitation and welfare services. They had the right to enjoy economic and social security, and the same civil and political rights as other human beings. A government department had been established to coordinate medical and social services and to ensure the availability of jobs for persons with disabilities.

32. The strength and continuation of growth in societies depended on the existence of healthy family patterns. The family should receive adequate protection and support; its malfunction could be considered as the malfunction of society as a whole.

33. The problem of ageing faced all societies. By the year 2025, older persons would constitute 14 per cent of the global population, and new policies and considerable resources would be necessary in order to deal with their special needs. The proclamation of the year 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons was a good opportunity for Member States to focus on issues concerning the elderly, in order to better identify the means to promote the quality of their life throughout the world.

34. Mr. WILMOT (Ghana) welcomed the statement made at the Committee's previous meeting by the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. His delegation was convinced that the Committee's efforts as part of the intergovernmental process would reinforce national implementation goals. The current discussion of social development helped to focus the international community's attention on specific social groups which, because of their circumstances, deserved particular care. The importance of the family as the basic unit of society had also received due attention. He hoped that Member States would work to fully implement action programmes on youth, older persons

and persons with disabilities. Success in those areas would contribute immensely to achieving the goal of social progress, justice and the betterment of the human condition.

35. The adoption of a number of decisions on the mandate, terms of reference and working methods of the Commission for Social Development, and of a new work programme to the year 2000 was an affirmation that the international community was ready to address the underlying causes of the profound problems affecting the world social situation, in order to eliminate distress and insecurity in the lives of all peoples.

36. More than a year after the World Summit for Social Development, the world social situation had changed little. To the problems caused by poverty could be added crime, drugs and ethnic strife, which had acquired global characteristics. Their ramifications required not only national action, but also action by the United Nations system with its capacity for cross-sectoral initiatives combining the mandates and specializations of its various agencies, funds and programmes. His delegation welcomed the decision of the Commission for Social Development, as approved by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1996/7, to tackle the special situation of Africa and the least developed countries, the enhancement of social development goals in structural adjustment programmes, and the mobilization of domestic and international resources for social development. The Secretary-General's report on cooperatives (A/51/267) was an important contribution to the principles and objectives of the World Summit.

37. The cooperative sector in Ghana enjoyed strong governmental support. It afforded an effective means for economic empowerment to those who otherwise would have no avenue for productive living. It was increasingly being used at the local level as a means whereby communities could make available appropriate and affordable basic services, thereby contributing to the fight against poverty, unemployment and social disintegration.

38. The international community must ensure that measures to foster social development yielded the expected results. In addition to the special needs of the young, the aged and disabled, and the family unit, attention must be paid to emerging issues and trends affecting social development as a whole. An integrated approach to social development would be the most effective means of dealing with the myriad problems that characterized the world social situation.

39. Ms. JIANG Qin (China) said that the question of youth, ageing and persons with disabilities occupied a very important place in the field of social development. It was gratifying that in recent years the United Nations had undertaken much beneficial work in those areas. The World Programme of Action for Youth had identified priority areas for development of particular relevance to young people, and the issue of ageing had also attracted increased attention worldwide. The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities had played an important role in improving the status of the disabled across the world.

40. The international community should, as a matter of urgency, move from policy-making to action so that the relevant programmes could be implemented. The gap between the developing and the developed countries was widening, and

many of the former were plagued by poverty, backwardness and shortage of funds. The majority of young people, older persons and persons with disabilities lived in developing countries, and the international community should focus its efforts on helping those countries to eradicate poverty. International cooperation should be enhanced to create conditions in developing countries for the education and employment of the young, the protection of older persons and the integration of the disabled. The Chinese Government had intensified its efforts in those areas, formulating and implementing a series of policies and regulations protecting the rights and interests of the young and promoting their participation in the nation's political, economic and social development.

41. Earlier in the meeting, a member of another delegation had mentioned a so-called Chinese youth and student movement. She hoped that he had done so out of ignorance; if so, it was regrettable. If, however, there had been an ulterior motive, her delegation strongly objected to such a groundless allegation.

42. A network of institutions for older persons had been established in China. A host of measures to protect their rights and interests and provide them with support, medical care, opportunities to offer their services to society, access to education and recreational facilities had been adopted. The Chinese Government had incorporated work for persons with disabilities in its overall development planning, and had taken practical measures to improve the situation of the disabled and to realize the goals of equality, participation and sharing.

43. Her Government would continue its work on the issues of young people, the elderly and disabled persons, take an active part in the United Nations activities in those fields and enhance its exchanges and cooperation with various countries to protect and promote the rights of those groups and facilitate their full participation in economic and social development. She hoped that the United Nations would attach greater importance to the work in those areas through strengthened international cooperation.

44. Mr. Hahm Myung CHUL (Republic of Korea) said that social development issues were complex, multidimensional and closely interlinked with economic development. Governments should not rely solely on the expectation that economic growth would improve the conditions of their people. Growth was, however, necessary for social development, particularly for the least developed countries. He urged developed and developing countries to forge a spirit of partnership so that aspirations to advance the world situation might be realized. Poverty eradication must be approached with decisive national action and international cooperation. His Government looked forward to implementing the Secretary-General's proposals for activities championing the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth was necessary in order to tap the potential of young people and encourage youth participation at all levels of development. His Government placed particular emphasis on international youth exchanges.

45. Although the Republic of Korea was still a relatively young society, the extension of life expectancy and low birth rates would lead to an increasingly ageing population. Recognizing the importance of enabling all people to participate actively in society throughout their lives, his Government had

developed measures such as employer incentives to encourage the hiring of older persons. Relevant regulations were under review with a view to enhancing their health and medical benefits. The upcoming International Year of Older Persons would provide a valuable opportunity to review the situation and to encourage the formulation of global policies and programmes.

46. Following the adoption of the Standard Rules, his Government aimed to establish more progressive policies for persons with disabilities, including an investment plan to promote employment.

47. In a rapidly changing world, the strengthened unity of the family was more important than ever. The concept of family was changing, reflecting dramatic shifts in economic structure and an evolving system of values. The family, nonetheless, remained the core unit of society, indispensable in providing support and educating children. In order to strengthen the family, societies must focus on the needs of women and children. Genuine social development could only be achieved through gender equality and the promotion of children's rights.

48. The continued political will at the national and international levels to invest in people and their well-being was of prime importance. All actors, in the private and public sectors as well as national and international bodies, should strive to transform words into reality.

49. Mr. KHRYSKOV (Russian Federation) commended the efforts of Member States in recent years to define the place and role of the United Nations in finding concrete solutions to existing social problems and in meeting the challenges of social development both in the near future and in the long term. His delegation supported the strengthening of the role and effectiveness of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council to enable them to carry out the tasks entrusted to them in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. Many countries faced acute social problems and it was therefore vital that the documents which emerged during the follow-up to the Copenhagen Summit should reflect the widest possible understanding of those problems and propose practical solutions upon which all countries could draw when reforming their own social policy. The needs and interests of every State should be taken into account, including those of countries with economies in transition.

50. He welcomed, in that regard, the proposal contained in the agreed conclusions on coordination of the United Nations system activities for poverty eradication, adopted by the Economic and Social Council (A/51/3 (Part I), chap. III), that the United Nations system should provide technical assistance for developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The Commission for Social Development must put forward practical measures for implementing the recommendations of the Copenhagen Summit and enhancing system-wide coordination. The specialized agencies also had an important part to play. Cooperation at the regional level was crucial, and his delegation wished to propose the holding of regional conferences on social development with a strong emphasis on the realization of the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

51. In the Russian Federation, economic reform had brought with it complex social problems, although the country now appeared to have turned a corner with

economic growth of approximately 2 per cent being forecast for the following year. His Government was currently seeking to create legal safeguards which would render the economic and social reforms irreversible. With regard to the Copenhagen Summit, a national committee had been formed to implement the Declaration and Programme of Action.

52. The stability of the world economy would depend to some extent on the success of the unprecedented transition in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe from centralized, planned economies to the market system. While the Governments of those countries recognized that they bore the primary responsibility, the international community must lend its support and, within the United Nations system, due regard should be given to the social problems that they faced.

53. Mr. AL-NASR (Qatar) said that since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 47/85 and the celebration of International Youth Year in 1985, issues involving youth had figured prominently in the international years designated by the General Assembly, and in international conferences. The General Assembly, in its guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up in the field of youth, recommended that States should elaborate national youth-related policies and programmes and establish the governmental and non-governmental infrastructure necessary to implement them.

54. Qatar had been one of the first countries to undertake its responsibilities with regard to youth, particularly in the field of sport. It had established a National Olympic Council, a National Sports Union and a General Committee for Youth and Sport. Youth-related services and activities enjoyed special attention. The General Committee for Youth and Sport had taken a number of important initiatives. Among its successes were the establishment of a Centre for Sports Medicine, the Qatari Youth Week held in Madrid, and a great increase in the number of sports centres and teams. Concern for youth extended to the educational and technological fields, and in order to keep abreast of new developments, the Qatari Educational Club and the Youth Centre for Technology had been established and enjoyed full support from the State. Wide-ranging future plans included the establishment of additional youth and sports facilities, the building of Olympic swimming pools, participation in regional and international sporting events and the preparation of a framework for youth-related concerns.

55. Youth was a valuable resource which must be developed and harnessed by the State. Young people played a leading role in Qatar, and their energy and ability were an important factor in implementing ambitious development programmes. It was recognized that young people had responsibilities and duties, and could make an effective contribution to society.

56. Mrs. LIMJUCO (Philippines) said that the recent major United Nations conferences on social issues had made it clear that human development had two dimensions: economic growth and social reform. The existence of one without the other was neither possible nor acceptable. Her Government had adopted a social reform agenda aimed at promoting economic recovery while addressing the issue of social equity by targeting the most needy groups.

57. In a poor country, the aim of development programmes should be to extend people's capabilities to enable them to meet their minimum basic needs. The report of the Secretary-General on cooperatives (A/51/267) recognized cooperative enterprise as a means by which the poorest people could gain a stake in the economy. Cooperatives allowed individuals to combine their resources, thus giving them greater economic weight. In the Philippines, the Punla Development Trust, a joint government and private-sector initiative, had been set up to build the capacities of institutions which provided credit for and promoted enterprise among the nation's poorest citizens. Her Government was committed to a "bottom-up", rather than a "trickle-down" strategy of eradicating poverty.

58. Young people represented a large proportion of the population of the Philippines. Youth issues, accordingly, were of great concern to her Government, which in March 1996 had welcomed the global launching in Manila of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. The Manila Declaration emanating from the Global Indigenous and Youth Cultural Olympics/Summit for Peace and Sustainable Development (A/51/293) contained proposals for implementing the Programme of Action. In the Philippines, a National Youth Commission had been created to formulate policy on youth and to coordinate related activities.

59. She welcomed the forming of a support group to coordinate the preparations for the International Year of Older Persons. She was encouraged by the progress made in developing a disability index based on the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, which were the subject of General Assembly resolution 50/144, introduced by the Philippines. Her delegation was ready to undertake further initiatives on disability and other social issues in coordination with other States and relevant non-governmental organizations.

60. Mr. RI Song Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the world social situation continued to deteriorate despite the efforts of the United Nations. Even as the world stood at the threshold of the twenty-first century, social evils such as poverty, organized crime and drug abuse were still rife, while the gap between the developed and developing nations continued to widen. Full implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action was a vital step towards resolving those problems. Every Member State must draw up a people-centred social development policy. The organs of the United Nations system, particularly the international financial institutions, should enhance their role in that field, according special attention to the needs of developing countries. The cessation of armed conflicts and the lifting of sanctions, whether imposed by the United Nations or by individual countries, were important for achieving social development.

61. Disability issues were of special concern to his Government. He urged all Member States to adopt effective policies to enable disabled persons to participate fully in all areas of life. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, disabled persons enjoyed equal rights and opportunities, often receiving preferential treatment.

62. It was his hope that the commitments made on social development at the recent major United Nations conferences would be speedily implemented and that the developed countries would offer the financial support necessary to achieve that goal.

63. Mr. TESSEMA (Ethiopia) said that the United Nations had been committed to promoting higher standards of living and finding solutions to social and economic problems since its inception. At the Copenhagen Summit, the family of nations had met to agree on joint action to eradicate poverty, expand productiv employment and enhance social integration. In its resolution 50/161, the General Assembly, endorsing the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, had recognized the critical importance of international cooperation to complement national action to achieve those goals. The commitments made at Copenhagen had been a source of great hope and optimism, in particular for developing countries.

64. In 1991, Ethiopia had emerged from 17 years of brutal dictatorship. His Government was endeavouring to rebuild the country's economy and infrastructure Despite years of famine and drought, Ethiopia had now reached the level of food self-sufficiency. The economic growth rate had risen to 7.7 per cent after a prolonged period of stagnation, while inflation stood at under 1 per cent. The eradication of poverty was a priority. The proportion of the national budget allocated to the social sector had increased dramatically since 1991. Measures on education, health care, population control and women's and youth issues were being implemented from the grass roots up. He urged the Governments of all developing countries to place greater emphasis on social services and to ensure that funding was directed towards the very poorest groups.

65. The eradication of poverty should be pursued with equal vigour by both developing and developed countries, for the consequences of poverty - drugs, diseases, pollution, migration, terrorism and political instability - respected no borders. However, the burden of external debt continued to hamper the development of many poor countries, with some of them spending over 30 per cent of precious foreign exchange earnings on debt servicing. Poverty could not be eradicated through anti-poverty programmes and declarations alone. New and additional resources, efforts and actions were urgently needed both at the national and international levels in order to ensure sustainable development fo all.

66. Ms. THAMIM (Pakistan) said that the state of the global economy had a direct bearing on social development. She was therefore heartened to note that according to the World Economic and Social Survey of 1996, the rate of growth o the world economy was accelerating, though it must become more sustainable. In developing countries, however, the growth of per capita gross domestic product had been small, and in most regions remained in real terms below that in 1980. At the same time, the flow of official development assistance from the donor countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) had declined to well below the agreed target. Against that background, the United Nations must find ways to alleviate the burden on poor countries of servicing their foreign debt.

67. Hunger, illiteracy, unemployment, social exclusion and drug abuse afflicted many of the world's young people. It was therefore imperative that Governments, together with the United Nations system and all the actors of civil society, should strive to implement the World Programme of Action for Youth. The capacity of the Youth Unit must be strengthened to enable it to carry out the Programme of Action.

68. The proportion of older persons in the world's population was increasing. The preparations for the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 must be supplemented by result-oriented programmes structured around the conceptual framework prepared by the Secretary-General (A/50/114). Developing countries in particular must pay special attention to the needs of their older citizens in terms of nutrition, health care, social security and family support. Disabled persons were one of the most neglected groups in United Nations programmes. Governments should therefore support the efforts of the Special Rapporteur on Disability and contribute generously to the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability.

69. She welcomed the Secretary-General's report on cooperatives (A/51/267). The contents should be widely disseminated in the developing countries with a view to raising awareness of the enormous potential of cooperatives to facilitate realization of the goals of the World Summit for Social Development.

70. Her Government had launched a comprehensive social action programme aimed at eradicating poverty, redressing gender inequalities, promoting rural development and protecting the environment. Economic reform and the Government's privatization policy had enhanced funding for social development. Special programmes had been established to aid the most vulnerable groups in society, including women, children, widows, orphans and the elderly. In addition, greater attention was being accorded to the rights of women, children, ethnic and religious minorities and those living in poverty.

71. Mr. AG OUMAR (Mali) said that he would highlight the measures taken by his Government to implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. With the Government's support, many associations of disabled persons had been formed and were now working in close cooperation with the Fédération malienne des associations de personnes handicappées. A national seminar would shortly be held on community-based rehabilitation. Already, one programme geared to community-based rehabilitation in the urban environment was under way in Bamako. A national survey had been carried out to evaluate the needs of young people with disabilities in terms of mobility aids and production had already begun. Among other initiatives, a programme on employment for the disabled was being broadcast on national radio and television and a manual on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons would shortly be published.

72. There was a need to rationalize the efforts of the various groups working on behalf of disabled persons and, to that end, his Government was organizing a management training workshop for the leaders of associations for disabled persons. The first national sports championships for the disabled would take place shortly. His Government was ready to initiate projects to generate income for disabled persons, thereby ending the problem of begging.

73. Mrs. HEPTULLAH (India) said that the main priority of social development in India was to tackle the problems of poverty and inequality. Efforts were being made to combine the imperatives of economic growth with those of social justice through State-sponsored social development, poverty-eradication strategies, affirmative action to redress inequalities and promote social justice, and a close relationship between the Government and non-governmental organizations. The scale of that undertaking in the context of underdevelopment, population pressure, competition for scarce resources and major social and economic transformations could not be underestimated. A key feature was the interplay between democracy, growth, empowerment and social justice, with a strategy centred on affirmative action to benefit the largest categories of the socially disadvantaged, by breaking down invisible barriers to political participation at all levels.

74. The family unit in India was very strong and provided the social security net for vulnerable family members; however, the traditional extended or joint family was increasingly being eroded because of the strains of modern life. Three aspects were especially relevant: to adapt the institution of the family to modern times while preserving the stabilizing functions of the traditional family; to emancipate women from traditionally defined roles to enable them to participate as equal partners in public life; and to control population growth, which was related both to gender justice and to the imperatives of economic development. India had been implementing active holistic family-welfare strategies over several decades based on the linkages between education, economic and social development, and population control.

75. The welfare of youth was closely linked to political stability, economic growth, and educational and employment opportunities; the future of society depended on harnessing their energies. The chief priorities were employment generation and universalization of elementary education along with reducing disparities in education between rural and urban areas and ensuring education for disadvantaged groups, notably the girl child. With regard to the question of ageing, her delegation associated itself with the comments made by Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

76. Four national institutes in four different areas of disability, namely visual, orthopaedic, speech and hearing, and mental handicaps, had been set up to provide education, training, counselling and rehabilitation. Major programmes to reduce disabilities had been adopted and technologies for disabled persons were being developed.

77. The Secretary-General's report on the cooperatives (A/51/267) contained valuable observations with regard to the efficacy of cooperatives in promoting social development.

78. The solution of the various problems of social development required both political commitment and substantial funds, national and international. It also required time. Adequate programmes for special categories could best be addressed only in the context of a general development effort for which an enabling international environment was essential. It was ironic that, despite the explicit recognition at the World Summit for Social Development that problems of underdevelopment required international cooperation, the utility of

international development cooperation was being questioned, development assistance had stagnated or declined, and more and more stringent conditionalities were being imposed under social clauses. There was a disturbing tendency to impose uniform standards of social development worldwide regardless of the stage of development of different parts of the world. International cooperation remained essential to facilitate and accelerate social and economic development.

79. Mr. SERIWA (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his delegation supported the statement on the question of ageing made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Despite the encouraging growth in the global economy, economic and social conditions in many developing countries, particularly in Africa, were still disturbing, owing to a large number of external factors such as an increased debt-burden. Such factors adversely affected social development. The goals set out in the Copenhagen Declaration could not be achieved in the absence of a supportive international economic climate. Donor countries and international financial institutions should give priority in all their development programmes to the development of human resources, through support for technical, educational and training programmes, and by improving health and social services. The human person was both the tool and the goal of development.

80. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had always tried to make the best use of its human resources and to improve economic and social conditions, while balancing the needs of the individual and society and promoting human rights. Ambitious development plans had given priority to education and training programmes, health, housing and social services. However, those plans had suffered a reverse in recent years due to the unjust sanctions regime imposed on the country, that had caused the Libyan Arab people grievous losses. The negative effects extended to all economic, social and humanitarian spheres. They had particularly affected the most vulnerable sectors of society, especially in regard to health and nutrition. His delegation hoped that the United Nations would take the necessary steps to end the sanctions.

81. Special attention was paid to disabled people in his country. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had presided over the Advisory Committee of the International Year for Disabled Persons in 1981, and had passed legislation guaranteeing the rights of disabled persons. A national council for disabled persons had been established in order to raise awareness of disability and integrate disabled persons into society. There were also numerous special facilities in many towns and villages.

82. The international community must continue its efforts to integrate disabled persons fully into society by means of the Long-term Strategy to Implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, and that special attention should be paid to the needs of the most vulnerable members of that sector, such as older persons, women and children.

83. The tenth anniversary of International Youth Year had provided an opportunity to concentrate on youth-related issues and to guarantee the right of young people to education, work, health care and full participation in development, in view of their fundamental role in that regard.

84. It was encouraging that resolutions were being adopted to facilitate equitable economic development, but the international community had to take urgent and effective steps to end the discriminatory policies and harsh economic measures imposed by some developed States unilaterally against certain developing countries as a means of imposing their wishes by force. A certain powerful State had recently passed legislation penalizing foreign companies involved in the oil and gas business in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in an attempt to impose its laws on other States, in violation of their sovereignty and of international law.

85. Mr. MINOVES-TRIQUELL (Andorra) said that youth issues were of major concern to his Government. He recalled that at the World Summit for Social Development, heads of State and Government had made a commitment to encourage the contribution of people of all age groups and foster dialogue between generations. His delegation believed that the problems facing the world's youth could best be addressed through an intergenerational approach. The World Programme of Action for Youth set out the priorities for action on youth issues. The international community must work together with the United Nations to ensure that the good intentions underlying that document were translated into positive outcomes. The forthcoming World Youth Forum to be held in Vienna would be particularly important in that regard.

86. He wished to highlight two areas of critical concern, namely access to work and human rights education. Unemployment was one of the most acute problems facing young people today. The huge growth of the labour force, in developing countries, would require massive job-creation initiatives. He was firmly convinced that human rights education should begin as early as possible, for young minds were especially susceptible to ideologies and fanaticism. It was imperative that young people should learn respect for human rights and tolerance, since the values inculcated in today's youth would define the shape of the world tomorrow. He called on UNESCO and on voluntary groups to expand their work in that area.

87. Mr. MEKDAD (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the World Summit for Social Development had demonstrated the concern of the international community in a changing world in which an unprecedented number of people suffered deprivation. The Syrian people were well aware of their responsibilities and of the role their country had to play. They were equally aware of the contribution which should be made by the industrialized countries to halting economic and social decline.

88. Despite being forced to devote a large part of its human and material resources to defending its land and people against the expansionist policies of Israel, the Syrian Arab Republic had undertaken a comprehensive and successful social development programme. The leadership provided by the President had ensured the political stability and democratic climate necessary for broad participation in youth-related activities. A number of non-governmental organizations enabled young people and students to protect their interests and rights and to carry out social, political, cultural, sporting and technical activities. Syria's strategy with regard to youth was based on their needs in modern society. Youth programmes guaranteed to young people a number of rights, including the right to education, work, participation in national decision-

making, relocation for purposes of study or work, and self-expression. His country had welcomed the World Programme of Action for Youth.

89. Older persons were treated with the greatest respect in Syria, and a National Council for the health care of older persons had elaborated a draft national plan to guarantee all their needs. His country would contribute to the preparations for the International Year of Older Persons (1999). Syrian society was unanimous in its view that the family was the basis of society and that family values and institutions should be strengthened. Special attention was also given to disabled persons, and special provisions had been made to facilitate their access to training and employment. Further measures were being taken in accordance with the Standard Rules annexed to General Assembly resolution 48/96. Special attention was also given to alleviating the problems faced by children, refugees, orphans and other groups living in difficult circumstances. However, increased resources were necessary in order to implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.

90. His country urged the international community to abide by the commitments undertaken at the World Summit for Social Development, particularly in regard to the provision by highly developed countries of the support necessary to developing countries, most importantly in the fields of finance and technology, with a view to making the world more democratic, humanitarian, secure and stable.

91. Mrs. AL-AWADHI (Kuwait) said that, under the Constitution, disabled persons were treated with especial concern in her country. In common with those with other special needs, disabled persons were provided by the State with a full range of social services and financial support. Recent legislation on the care of disabled persons represented an important achievement in that it guaranteed their rights in every sphere. For example, the State guaranteed to disabled persons appropriate housing, whatever their circumstances. The number of special training centres was being increased, and disabled persons were guaranteed special maternity rights. Special pension provisions had been made for them, and they were exempt from many taxes. Higher child benefits were provided for children born with disabilities. Government agencies followed international specifications in providing access to public facilities and transportation for disabled persons. Kuwaiti businesses employing more than 50 persons were obliged to employ suitably qualified disabled persons, to make up at least 2 per cent of their workforce.

92. The Government was endeavouring to alleviate the effects of the Iraqi occupation on disabled persons, many of whom had suffered inhuman treatment. Moreover, that occupation had greatly increased their numbers. Provision was being made to minimize the resulting social and psychological effects and to fully integrate those who had suffered into society. Kuwait was guided by the Long-term Strategy to Implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.

93. Mr. HABONIMANA (Burundi) said that the crisis which had engulfed Burundi for the past three years had gravely undermined government efforts to assist youth, the elderly, the disabled and the family. The economic embargo unjustly imposed against Burundi by neighbouring countries had devastated an entire

people and had seriously jeopardized ongoing programmes of health, education and training, rehabilitation of the disabled, assistance to the elderly, job creation and family planning. The sanctions had been taken in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, the Charters of the United Nations and of the Organization of African Unity and regional and subregional economic and trade agreements.

94. The economic embargo was reinforcing the rebellion and thereby contributing to the acts of vandalism, massacre of innocent people and destruction of the social and economic infrastructure. Armed groups and militia were intensifying their attacks, directed mainly against the most vulnerable persons in the population. The embargo was particularly devastating for a poor country almost entirely dependent on agriculture. Children, women and the elderly, who constituted 80 per cent of the affected population, were the first to suffer. Epidemic diseases had taken an enormous toll, both in Burundi and in the neighbouring countries which were imposing the embargo; that situation was aggravated by famine and malnutrition. A large proportion of young people had been forced to abandon their education, leading to illiteracy, prostitution, and crime.

95. His delegation therefore urgently appealed to the international community, and particularly to the United Nations, to put pressure on Burundi's neighbours to lift the embargo immediately. The international community must mobilize to assist the people of Burundi.

96. Mr. AL-HITTI (Iraq) said that, since the end of the cold war, increased attention had been paid to economic and social development, particularly in the developing world. The issue was of concern to the whole world, since development was the fruit of security, and the cycle of security and increased development benefited all States, replacing the cycle of poverty, hunger and backwardness.

97. International economic relations were, however, at a critical stage, owing to the unbalanced economic growth of recent decades and the growing disparity between North and South. The situation with regard to human development was equally grave, since illiteracy, poverty, hunger, disease and discrimination were widespread in many countries and hampered development. Some bilateral and multilateral practices also hampered development, and must be reviewed. Specifically, some United Nations bodies played a negative role in certain developing countries. The Security Council and certain Member States imposed sanctions, with disastrous consequences on the peoples and countries concerned. The Secretary-General himself, in his Supplement to an Agenda for Peace (A/50/60-S/1995/1, para. 70), had noted that sanctions could conflict with the development objectives of the Organization and do long-term damage to the productive capacity of the target country, in addition to having a severe effect on other countries that were neighbours or major economic partners of the target country.

98. The Charter gave no guidance with regard to the imposition of sanctions, their extent, effect on development and human rights in the target country, nor as to how and when the sanctions should be lifted. That had permitted certain members of the Security Council to change the use of sanctions from an

instrument for settling international disputes to one for punishing and imposing starvation on peoples.

99. An urgent review of the sanctions imposed on Iraq was necessary, since they had brought into question the credibility and morality of the United Nations. Certain Council members were using the sanctions to impose their own political agenda, unconnected with the purposes of the United Nations. Many reports issued by the United Nations and other humanitarian bodies gave details of the destructive effects of the sanctions on development in general, and individuals in particular. The negative impact of sanctions greatly exceeded the expected gains. For example, statistics showed that the number of those who had died in Iraq as a direct result of the imposition of sanctions was five times greater than the number killed by the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. In June 1996 alone nearly 4,500 children under five years old had died, as compared with some 600 in the whole of 1989. The number of children over the age of five who had died in the same month had been nearly 6,500, as compared with some 1,700 in the whole of 1989. Thus, the sanctions constituted a form of genocide carried out against the Iraqi people.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.